

Noah preached to the wicked people of his day (Genesis 6). They had a choice. They could believe Noah's message, repent and be saved, or ignore it and perish. They ignored it and perished. God did not change His mind. Noah also had a choice. He could build an ark and be saved, or he could reject God's word. He built an ark. "Noah **carried out exactly all God had commanded him**" (verse 22). Because he was obedient, Noah was saved. For us to ignore God's clear command to be baptized is to choose death rather than life.

The jailor at Philippi asked Paul and Silas: "Sirs, **what must I do** to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). The answer came: "Put your trust in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." He *obeyed* and *was baptized*.

Jesus himself, though sinless, was baptized. He said: "**It is right** for us to do all that God requires" (Matthew 3:15). Can we, who are sinners, ignore baptism when Jesus didn't? We must follow his steps in this, as in all things.

6. WHAT MUST I DO NOW, SO THAT I CAN ENJOY LIFE FOR EVER IN GOD'S KINGDOM?

To enjoy life for ever, you must take *the five steps to salvation*; every one of them. The record in Acts 10 concerning Cornelius shows us that just to live a good life, without being baptized, is not good enough. Peter *ordered* Cornelius "**to be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ" (verse 48).

Baptism is the start of a new life which will bring you great joy. It will give your life a renewed purpose. In an uncertain world,

the God of Peace will give you peace.

Are you wise enough to follow *the command* of Jesus Christ to believe and be baptized? What a blessing awaits you if you are! God will bless you with life for evermore, when Jesus returns to establish his kingdom.

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

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BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS

Baptism

ITS MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

When you have read this leaflet you will know the answers to these questions:

1. Were the early followers of Jesus Christ baptized?
2. What does the Bible say about baptism?
3. What does baptism mean?
4. Why do I need to be baptized?
5. Why must I obey God's commands?
6. What must I do now, so that I can enjoy life for ever in God's kingdom?

1. WERE THE EARLY FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST BAPTIZED?

Yes, the early followers of Jesus were baptized. Why? Because Jesus commanded them to be. It was one of the most important commandments he gave. Baptism was the way in which people showed that they believed in Jesus and his teaching. Each new convert became a member of a special group of people, the disciples of Jesus. They preached God's Word and looked forward to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

Can you imagine a man being accepted into the army of any country, *if he refused to obey the orders of the Commander-in-Chief*? Jesus Christ, the Christian Leader, said, “If you love me **you will obey my commands**” (John 14:15). He also said, “Those who **believe it** (the gospel – the good news of his teaching) and **receive baptism** will be saved” (Mark 16:16). We must take Jesus at his word if we want to be accepted by him.

Baptism is a life-saving command from Jesus Christ. Philip believed that. He preached in Samaria, so successfully, that “when they came **to believe** Philip, with his good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike **were baptized** (Acts 8:12). The message of belief, followed by baptism, is at the heart of the New Testament.

2. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BAPTISM?

Today, many churches sprinkle infants on the head and call it Baptism. This is not the baptism of the Bible. When the Bible speaks of baptism it tells us of adult men and women who make a deliberate choice. They wanted to obey the Lord Jesus and be baptized. They were completely covered in water. This is the baptism of Bible times.

A good example to prove this, is found in Acts 8. Philip talked with an Ethiopian eunuch. He “told him the good news of Jesus” (verse 35). No doubt, while they talked, they were both carrying water for their journeys. It would have been easy for

Philip to sprinkle water on the eunuch's head. But the eunuch, who believed the words Philip preached about Jesus, was not baptized until “they came to some water” (verse 36). The eunuch then said, “Look, here is water: what is to prevent my being baptized?” So “they both **went down into the water**, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they **came up from the water** ... the eunuch ... went on his way rejoicing”.

Notice, they both “*went down into*” and “*came up from*” the water. The eunuch was *a mature person who believed* the things preached by Philip concerning Jesus Christ. He was *completely covered by water*.

3. WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN?

Why do we have to be completely covered by water when we are baptized? God chose immersion in water because it is a very powerful way of showing us that our sins must be forgiven. Believers realise that they need saving from sin and require God's grace. They go under the water in baptism, and die to an old way of life. They come up out of the water to a new life. In baptism, believers identify with the death of Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Just as Jesus rose from the dead, they also rise from the waters of baptism to “set out on a new life” (Romans 6:4). Now, believers are God's children, and they desire to please Him. If they do so, He will give them His great gift of everlasting life. This will happen when Jesus comes to rule the world (Luke 1:32,33). No wonder Jesus regarded baptism as being so important.

4. WHY DO I NEED TO BE BAPTIZED?

You need to be baptized because, like all mankind, you are dying. We have all earned the wage of sin. Paul tells us “**the wage is death**” (Romans 6:23). Without God, death is the end.

People have a very bad habit of not wanting to think about important issues that they do not like. Death is one of those issues. We must be wise enough to face it. The good news is that God offers us everlasting life; *but on His terms*. That is fair, as He is the giver of life. Peter tells us, in Acts 2 and 3, that we must take *five steps to salvation*. They are:

- (a) Believe in Jesus Christ and his message.
- (b) Repent (have a change of mind, realising that we need God and His forgiveness).
- (c) Be converted (turn round and walk towards God).
- (d) Obey Jesus by having our sins washed away in baptism.
- (e) Continue faithfully in God's way (Acts 2:27-42; 3:18-21).

God always keeps His promises. He will never let us down. As Jesus said, “No one can snatch them out of the Father's care” (John 10:29).

5. WHY MUST I OBEY GOD'S COMMANDS?

The Bible tells us, from Genesis to Revelation, that God is serious. Obedience to God's commands brings life, and disobedience results in death. God always means what He says.